A

SERMON

PREACHED ON SABBATH AFTERNOON, JANUARY 25, 1857.

WITH REFERENCE TO THE DEATH OF

NATHANIEL DAVIS,

RULING ELDER IN THE

SECOND PESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ALBANY.

BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.,

MINISTER OF THE SAID CHURCH.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE SESSION OF THE CHURCH.

ALBANY:

VAN BENTHUYSEN, PRINTER, 407 BROADWAY.

1857.

SERMON.

GENESIS V. 24.

And Enoch walked with God; and he was not,—for God took him.

Enoch is one of the brightest lights of patriarchal history. Though his life must have been one of extraordinary interest,—for he was for three hundred years contemporary with the father of our race,—all the notices that we have of him are contained in a few brief sentences. The substance of the record, including two incidental allusions to him in the New Testament, is that he was the son of Jared,—of whom we know nothing except his name; that he was the father of Methuselah; that he delivered a prophecy concerning the general judgment; that the period of his sojourn upon earth was three hundred and sixty five years; and finally that he walked with God and was translated. These two latter facts particularly may be considered

as an epitome of his history—as embodying at once the manner of his life and the manner of his departure. To these two points let me now, for a few moments, direct your attention.

I. *The manner in which this Patriarch lived* is indicated by the expression—he "walked with God." And what is it to walk with God?

The first and most general thing implied in it is *conformity* to God—to his *character* and his *will*. This of course takes for granted some *knowledge* of God; for this conformity is an intelligent and voluntary exercise; and it were impossible that we should be intelligently conformed to a Being of whom we were altogether ignorant. How far the Patriarchs were enlightened in respect to the Divine character, especially as it was to be developed in connection with the great work of redeeming mercy, it is impossible for us to determine; but we are certain that they knew so much as to exercise a saving faith—for it is expressly said of Enoch that he "pleased God;" and it is immediately added—"but without faith it is impossible to please Him." But whatever may have been the measure of knowledge possessed by the Patriarchs, we who live amidst the noonday splendours

of Christianity, and have the benefit of the accumulated revelations which God has made to the Church under its several dispensations, need not even be in doubt in regard to any thing pertaining to the character of God or the scheme of his providence and grace, that is necessary to bring us into the most endearing relations to Him. A certain degree of this knowledge is presupposed in the idea of our reconciliation to Him; but in the act of becoming reconciled, and in our progress towards the life everlasting, our views of God gradually become more enlarged, more intense and spiritual and transforming.

He who walks with God is conformed to the Divine *character*—not indeed as far as it is possible that finite should be conformed to infinite; but in such a sense and to such a degree that the soul may be said to "bear the image of the Heavenly;"—to be "created anew in Christ Jesus." The intellect indeed shares the renovating process; for the light that shines into the understanding at once purifies and quickens as well as illumines; but it is the heart more especially upon which the Spirit leaves the Divine impress. The rebellious temper has been broken, and a child-like, submissive temper has

come in its place. That love of the world amounting to idolatry, that used to be there, has made way for the worship of the only living and true God. The soul's tendencies and aspirations are spiritual, celestial; and what constitutes its greatest burden is, that its harmony with God's moral perfections should be so incomplete. He who walks with God is already cast in the Divine mould, and is destined to stand forth at last a perfect specimen of God's new creating workmanship.

But he is conformed to the *will* as well as to the character of God—indeed the one necessarily involves the other. The prayer which is ever going up from his heart is—"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"—and he watches habitually for the answer to this prayer, not only in the movements of God's providence, but in the silent and devout workings of his own spirit. His conscientious and deliberate aim is to have respect unto all God's commandments. He never attempts a compromise with conscience for the neglect of one duty that is distasteful, by being over-exact in the performance of another that involves no self-denial — never thinks to excuse particular delinquencies or even

indiscretions on the ground of general consistency of conduct; but in all things he endeavours to approve himself to God as a faithful servant. No matter what may be his relations or circumstances in life, he aims to act in a manner befitting them. Reverence and obedience towards God, justice and charity towards men, watchfulness and restraint towards himself,—he makes it his daily business to exercise; and while in all this he renders homage to the Divine will, he is hereby brought continually into a nearer resemblance to the Divine character.

Again: In walking with God there is implied *communion* with Him. When men walk in company, it is that they may hold intercourse with each other; or if that be not the direct object, it is at least ordinarily an incidental result. So when men walk with God, it is that they may hold communion with *Him*—that they may open their hearts to Him in devout exercises and receive the assurances of his favour in return. This intercourse that is thus carried on between earth and Heaven, is indeed an overmatch for the highest conceptions of worldly wisdom; but that makes nothing against its

reality,—for you know on what authority it has been said, "the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God." But every one who really walks with God,—in other words, every true Christian, will testify from the depths of his inmost soul, not only that this intercourse of which I speak is a reality, but that it forms the brightest, sweetest, most ennobling part of Christian experience. There are no circumstances in which the good man can be placed, in which it is not his privilege to put himself into direct communion with Heaven—to ask and to receive counsel and help from on high. But there are seasons when this privilege is felt to be peculiarly precious. In times of difficulty and embarrassment, when the path of duty seems to be hid, and, for aught that appears, some important, perhaps decisive step must be taken in the dark—what a privilege is it to the Christian that by one earnest believing prayer he may find out the way in which he should walk, and obtain strength to proceed with an unfaltering step! In times of bereavement, when every sound that strikes his ear seems like an echo of the destroyer's footsteps,—who can tell the blessedness of flying into his Heavenly

Father's arms, and hearing Him speak words of peace to his troubled spirit, and bid him stay himself upon his blessed promises, and be at rest. And so too when death casts out his signals, and every thing proclaims to the Christian that he is just stepping into that cold dark stream, of which he has heard so much but knows so little, what remains for him but to take the hand of his gracious Lord and Redeemer, and walk fearlessly and triumphantly into Heaven? In each of these several cases, who can estimate the blessedness of holding communion with God? And why should I not speak also of this privilege, as it is connected with the delightful service in which you have been engaged to-day; for if the Christian ever comes near to his Lord, or has a right to expect ever to be cheered with the tokens of his love, it is in that grateful commemorative act. You who walk with God are all vouchers for the truth of what I am saying—your own experience supplies the evidence that the High and the Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, regards with favour and answers with blessing even the faintest whisper which the contrite and believing heart breathes into his ear.

I only add—and it is scarcely a modification of the preceding thought—that walking with God implies *complacency* in Him. If you walk with a man and hold free and pleasant intercourse with him, that, of itself, would seem to imply that you feel a complacency in at least some parts of his character. And the Christian who walks with God, thereby testifies not only his approbation of but his delight in all the perfections of the Divine character. It is not merely his gentler but sterner attributes,—not merely his loving kindness and tender mercy, but his justice and holiness and truth binding Him to the execution of all his threatnings, that stand forth to the eye and heart of the Christian clothed with infinite excellence and beauty. And this complacency extends not only to the combined abstract perfections of God, but to the varied manifestations of those perfections in the works of nature and providence, and above all in that wonderful and merciful economy by which ruined man is exalted to be a king and a priest unto God. The sinner unrenewed and unreconciled may have some intelligent view of the Divine character, and especially of the plan of salvation,—so honourable to God, so abasing to

guilty man; but if he renders his assent to it, it is at best a reluctant and constrained assent; whereas he who really walks with God, regards it with cordial approbation and delight;—and that not merely as opening the only passage to Heaven, but as reflecting upon his moral vision the condensed glory of the Godhead.

Thus far I have considered the phrase "walking with God" as only embodying the essential elements of holy living—in other words as descriptive of the character of every true Christian. But it admits of a higher construction. It may denote—and no doubt it was intended in the text to denote—not only a truly religious character, but an *exalted type* of that character. Enoch, we have reason to believe, was much more than an ordinary saint—for had it been otherwise, we cannot suppose that he would have been thus singled out as a subject for special Divine approbation—least of all can we imagine that he would have been thus gloriously signalized in his departure. And then no doubt his piety shone the brighter from its contrast with the surrounding moral darkness; for the generation to which he belonged had sunk to almost the lowest point of degeneracy. He

stood up and bore a noble testimony for God and his truth and his honour, and resisted steadfastly the current of impiety and vice; for in the circumstances in which he was placed, he could not otherwise have been said, even in the humblest sense, to have walked with God. If the prevailing corruption of the times made his piety *appear* more conspicuous, it is not improbable that the watchfulness and self-discipline which that untoward state of things imposed upon him, had really much to do in elevating him to that sublime pitch of moral virtue which has caused his name to be embalmed through every dispensation.

Blessed be God, the case of Enoch, as an example of eminent piety in a time of general religious insensibility, does not stand alone: the Church has never seen so dark a day, but some have been found walking closely with God, and letting their light shine. They may have wept in secret places; they may have prophesied in sackcloth; they may have been driven into the caves and dens of the earth; but as nothing has been able to separate them from the love of Christ, so neither has anything been able to cool the ardour of their love *to* Christ, or to silence

their testimony to the riches and depths of Divine grace and wisdom, or to bring about the semblance of a compromise with the spirit of the world. So it was in the early ages of the Church; so it was at the period of the Reformation; and so it is, to a greater or less extent, in our own day. We have ourselves been conversant with men who have advanced much beyond the ordinary point of Christian attainment; and though we may not have seen them bracing themselves against a storm of persecution, we *have* seen them vindicating the authority and maintaining the honour of their religion, in circumstances under which any other faith than that which is strong enough to remove mountains would have faltered and been overwhelmed.

II. Having thus spoken of the manner in which the Patriarch lived, as illustrative not only of the essential elements of a holy life in any circumstances, but of that eminence of faith and piety which casts the more ordinary type of Christian character into the shade; let me ask you now to contemplate very briefly *the manner in which he left the world*—the record of his departure is not an obituary,—for he did not die—it is simply an announcement that he

was miraculously borne to Heaven without taking so much as a single step in the dark valley—"he was not, for God took him;" or, as the Apostle says, he "was not found, because God had translated him." He was taken up by the ministry of angels to his glorious home; and in the act of thus making the passage from earth to Heaven, he experienced that wonderful transformation that was necessary to his becoming a partaker of immortal glory;—the same change no doubt which will pass upon that generation of the saints who shall be here to meet the Lord when He comes in the clouds of Heaven.

Does any one ask wherefore it was that Enoch was thus signally honoured in his exit from the world, above all the men of his generation, or indeed of any generation within the period of the patriarchal economy? I answer, *that* is a question that can be referred only to Him who maketh one vessel to honour and another to dishonour. But if the inquiry be why God was pleased to select some one individual to be thus gloriously taken up, the answer is easy—it was that the doctrine of a future state, of an immortal life, might be confirmed to the faith of the Church—nay more,

that the doctrine of the resurrection might be foreshadowed, inasmuch as it was thereby shown that the body may exist incorruptible and immortal to share the glorious life to which the soul is destined. Herein contemplate the riches of the Divine wisdom. In each dispensation of the Church, God has been pleased to furnish one example of an immediate translation to glory—Enoch under the patriarchal dispensation; Elijah under the Mosaic; and under the last and most perfect of all, Jesus, the great High Priest of our profession, who has risen and ascended not only to demonstrate the possibility, the certainty of the resurrection and ascension of his saints, but actually to perfect that provision by which this glorious issue shall be accomplished. This doctrine of the substantial immortality of man's body, after taking its allotted rest in the grave, was at first but faintly revealed; but the light in which it was seen gradually became stronger, until it reached a meridian brightness. Every thing pertaining to the glorious future of the ransomed is now rendered as certain and as clear, not only as God's revealed purposes, but as the Saviour's mediatorial triumph, can make it. I love to

linger about the empty tomb of Joseph; I love to stand and gaze at the glorious ascension from Olivet; I love to think of my Redeemer as still sharing my own nature while He sits upon the throne; for herein I recognise the evidence that the earthly house of this tabernacle is to be succeeded by the building of God; that dissolution is to be the harbinger of resurrection; and resurrection is to crown the process by which the ultimate perfection of our entire humanity is to be secured.

But though Enoch may be followed in his walk with God, he cannot be followed in his literal translation to glory. It is the ordinance of God that his saints should go to Heaven by way of the dark valley; that the body should pass a long night in the grave, and finally be glorified in the act of awaking from the sepulchral slumber. This is true of all without exception; for since Jesus has risen and ascended, there is no longer occasion for any such miraculous demonstrations. We have now all the evidence that we need—all that we could reasonably ask—that the believer in his entire person is destined to an immortal life.

Still, though there is now but the one dark path from earth to Heaven, there are two ways in which the substance of a translation seems to be realized without the form; and examples in both occur so frequently that many of you at least must, at some time or other, have witnessed them.

In all those cases in which Death's terrors are completely neutralized by the power of a triumphant faith, the departure of the soul, despite even of the physical process of dying, may be regarded as a sort of translation. Such are the natural terrors of Death, that any thing that defies or disregards them, save living faith in the Conqueror of Death,—though it may be called courage or heroism, really deserves no better name than madness. But there are facts innumerable to prove that Christian faith *is* adequate to the virtual abolishing of Death, even when the monster seems to have his own way and to accomplish his appropriate work. Look at that man standing erect, and even singing God's praise, amidst martyr fires—is it that his sinews are iron, and his nerves brass, and his whole frame built of material that is proof against the flames? No—his flesh as naturally shrinks from

contact with the fire as that of another man—the secret of his triumph is that faith is performing one of its mightiest works in his soul—his heart is so filled with the love of Christ, and his eye so enraptured by the visions of glory, that he can stand and calmly wait for the flames to burn a passage for him into Heaven. But we need not go back to the martyr ages for examples—modern Christian Biography supplies them without number; nay, I venture to say that there are such cases embalmed in the memories and the hearts of many of you; for you have had friends who have finished their course with such joy, that the chariot of glory in which they ascended has seemed to you almost as a visible and palpable thing. Say whether such a death has not in it all the most glorious elements of a translation. Was Enoch or Elijah, who entered Heaven bodily, thus escaping Death altogether, really to be accounted more blessed, than that saint who escapes all the *terrors* of Death, and leaves his body to await the glorifying process of the resurrection?

The other form of dying to which I referred that may well be likened to a translation, is that in which the change occurs so suddenly,

that the individual is not conscious of it till it is actually past. Death has made no signs of his approach. There has been nothing to indicate the workings of any insidious malady. The pulsations have seemed strong and regular and healthful. The step has been firm, the countenance bright, the hands busy, and every thing to betoken perhaps a protracted earthly existence The individual may be engaged in his ordinary worldly concerns; or he may have just bowed his knee in the closet, or had his family around him at the domestic altar; when, in the twinkling of an eye, the current of life sets back, and he is a glorified saint in Heaven. He misses the mortal body indeed, but he misses it only as a clog to the soul's operations. If he has been in the dark valley, he was there without knowing it—it was no dark valley to *him*. He had no time to think of dying, till his Redeemer had received him out of Death's hands, and placed upon his head the crown of life. Here again, may not this mode of departure fitly be compared to a translation? No matter how much he may have trembled in the remote prospect of death,—he had no *opportunity* even, to tremble when it came—he laid aside his

garments of mortality, and put on his immortal robes—all in a single moment. Enoch did not make the passage from earth to Heaven, with less of apprehension or terror than he.

We are doubtless to regard the translation of the Patriarch as a signal mark of the Divine favour in consideration of his eminent faith and piety; for you observe that the manner in which he left the world is recorded in immediate connection with the manner in which he had lived in it. And why may we not view the triumphant or the instantaneous death of the Christian in the same light? Who shall say that it is not in consideration of his having walked closely with God, that he realizes such rich manifestations of the Divine favour in his last hour; that he is enabled, with his dying breath, to deliver a testimony to the living power of Christ and his Gospel, that no caviller who stands by and hears it, dares to gainsay? And who shall say that it is not for the same reason, that the Christian is sometimes ushered at once into the world of glory, without seeming to go through the formality of dying,—while yet a separation from the earthly tabernacle is really effected? You will ask perhaps whether a

sudden death is not rather to be deprecated than desired. I answer, it is one thing to a sinner and another to a saint; and perhaps it may be considered as a ministration of mercy or of judgment, according to the character of the individual who is the subject of it. The sinner who has come down to his death bed unreconciled to God,—however little prospect there may be that he will improve the poor opportunity furnished by a lingering death to become prepared for Heaven,—may well value the hours or moments which may even then be allotted to him; for if the thief on the cross embraced Christ and was forgiven in his last moments, so there is a *possibility* that this may take place in respect to *him*. But the Christian whose salvation does not depend in any sense upon his being active in his last moments, may surely regard it as a blessing to be taken instantly to Heaven, and thus to be saved from all bodily suffering, from the sad parting with friends, from everything gloomy that pertains to a lingering death; though, if God is pleased to ordain that he should die by a more gradual process,—thus giving him an opportunity to work for his Master even while he is making

the dark passage,—this also he may reasonably regard as a token of his Heavenly Father's love. Indeed there is blessing in the Christian's death,—come when and how it may; for not only is it among the "all things" which "shall work together for his good," but it is the divinely appointed entrance way into the world of glory. If I may only know that Heaven will be my home at last, I may well be contented to have no voice in regard to the manner of being introduced there.

It has doubtless already occurred to you that I have selected my subject for this afternoon with a view to bring our meditations, as far as possible, into harmony with the solemn utterances of God's providence. A man has just fallen in the midst of us, whose character and relations were such that I should think it wrong to suffer him to pass away without bearing public testimony to his sterling virtues and his eminently useful life. Here especially, in the sanctuary where he has worshipped ever since it was opened; amidst the church of which he has been a member almost from the time when it was gathered, and an officer during much the greater part of that period; and I may add, now

when the communion is just passed in which we have been obliged to feel, for the first time, that he would be no longer present with us either as a partaker or a helper, I deem it especially fitting that at least a brief tribute should be paid to his memory. And in performing such a service, I feel confident that I shall meet not only the expectations but the demands of this entire congregation; for sure I am that if there was a man among us who had many friends and no enemies, who was highly esteemed for his work's sake, and whose loss from many circles of Christian usefulness must be deeply felt, that man was NATHANIEL DAVIS.

There are scarcely any now belonging to this congregation, whose residence in this city did not commence at a later period than did that of our departed friend; and yet he did not come hither until he had reached early manhood. He was born in Boston in the year 1780; but at a period which his memory did not reach, his father's family took up their residence at Dedham, where he passed several of his early years under the ministry of the Rev. Jason Haven,—well known at that day among the clergy of New England. At the age of about sixteen, he went to live

at Northampton as a merchant's clerk; and after remaining there a few years, transferred his residence to Hartford, where for some time he served in a similar capacity. In 1805, he became a resident of this city, where he entered into business relations, and has been employed in different ways, and with various degrees of success, till the close of his life. In May, 1816, at the second Communion ever held here, he became a member of this church by a profession of his faith. So highly was he esteemed by the church and especially by its excellent pastor, that after a few years, while he was yet comparatively young in his membership, he was chosen to the responsible office of Ruling Elder. The only remaining event in his history to which I need refer, is that on Tuesday morning last, when there was nothing to indicate the approach of death or even of disease—to the surprise and consternation of his family, he fell lifeless in the midst of them.

A glance at the character of our deceased friend, as it came out in his life, will be enough to show that, like Enoch, he "walked with God;" and no language could more strikingly represent his departure than that which, in the text, is

applied to the Patriarch—"He was not; for God took him."

It will not be questioned by any who knew Mr. Davis, that he was in some respects eminently favoured in his moral constitution. His Maker endowed him with a calm and equable temperament, and with an amiable and kindly spirit, which at once secured him from the evils incident to an impetuous or impulsive habit, and commended him to the good will and confidence of his fellow men. This was a good stock upon which to engraft a religious character—the graces of nature and the graces of the Spirit were so intermingled that while they were mutually auxiliary to each other's growth, none but the Omniscient eye could run the line between them. His character, though not distinguished by those strongly marked qualities, which make sudden and powerful impressions, was a beautiful compound of simplicity, humility, integrity, consistency, activity, charity, and devotion. These characteristics he uniformly displayed; and the result was—it could not but be—that his life was one of quiet but very extensive usefulness; and yet another result is that he has left behind him a name which

the whole surrounding community delight to honour.

Let me speak of him for a moment in some of his different relations. It does not perhaps become me to invade the privacy of the domestic circle, where hearts act and react upon each other in the warmth of conjugal and parental and filial love; but if I mistake not, those who have known most of him at home will tell us out of a full heart, that a more devoted husband and father than he could not be found in any dwelling. Well do I remember—and some of you, I am sure, remember—that terrible hour when the tidings broke upon him as suddenly as his own death, that a beloved child with whom he had parted but a few hours before, had fallen a victim to one of those disasters on the river which have occasionally made our ears to tingle.* When I met him, I saw that the deep waters had come over his soul, and that in the shock of his natural sensibilities, he had well nigh lost his hold of those great truths which alone could keep him from sinking; but it was not long before he recovered fully his grasp of the Divine promises, and was able to

*William Davis perished in the wreck of the steamboat Swallow in 1845.

say in the spirit of reverent submission—"Let Him do what seemeth Him good." That no doubt was the greatest domestic trial of his life; and though, in due time, he regained his accustomed cheerfulness, it was only necessary to allude to the event in his presence, to see that his mind was filling with tender recollections.

In his ordinary intercourse with his fellow men, no one could be more considerate, conciliatory, and ready to every kind office. The smile into which his face so easily relaxed, on meeting you, was a faithful index to the kindly spirit that breathed from his lips and guided and controlled his actions. No one ever feared to meet him, lest he should find him in ill humour, or be chilled by a distant manner or an equivocal salutation. The only time I ever saw him irritated, I was obliged to take his own word for it; for neither his countenance nor his manner revealed any such thing. No one, I venture to say, ever asked of him a favour which it was in his power to bestow, but that it was promptly and cheerfully granted. And I am sure I may safely add, no one, even in the most intimate and critical business relations with him, could ever charge him with an act of doubtful honesty

or with taking an unfair advantage. In the walks of social life as well as of commercial enterprise, and even amidst sudden reverses of fortune, he has always sustained and deservedly sustained the reputation of being an ingenuous, kind hearted, and honourable man.

If I were to speak of Mr. Davis' *Christian* character as distinct from his developments in the various relations of life, I should say that it was marked by great equanimity, consistency, and unobtrusive activity. There was nothing in his religion that was fitful—he was never carried away by sudden impulses; and hence I have observed that in seasons of revival, when his mind has really been acted upon with great power,—though he has been earnest in promoting the work, he has never betrayed the slightest tendency to enthusiasm. He has seemed to live in the fear and love of God habitually; and his conduct in the Church and in the world has been so much of a piece, as to preclude the least doubt of his sincerity. No man valued the privileges of the sanctuary and the lecture room more than he; and no one availed himself of them more constantly or more gratefully. There are those here to whom

it comes as a sad reflection that he has led them to the throne of grace for the last time.

As an officer in the Church, I may say without the fear of contradiction, that he has been equally diligent, useful, and respected. Though, for several years past, the infirmities of age have been creeping over him and diminishing somewhat his bodily activity, I am not aware that there has been any abatement of the zeal and fidelity with which he has discharged his official duties. In attendance on the meetings of Session no one has been more constant and punctual than he; and I do not remember an instance in which he has shrunk from any duty that his brethren have assigned to him. He has made it a matter both of conscience and of pleasure to visit extensively in the families of the congregation; and many a report has he brought to me of the cordial welcome he had received and the delightful hour he had passed; and I may say too that I have often had a report from the other side, of the high Christian satisfaction which his visit had imparted. He was emphatically the friend of the poor—he not only took knowledge of their necessities, but took measures to supply them; and I venture

to say that there is within the sound of my voice more than one witness of this description to his ever watchful and beneficent activity.

And this leads me to speak of him in his connection with the more public interests of the Church, and especially with those benevolent movements of which our own city is the more immediate theatre. For more than thirty years he has been the Treasurer of the Albany Presbytery; and for more than half of that period, I believe, he was the local agent of the American Board of Foreign Missions,—to say nothing of the fact that he was for many years Treasurer of this congregation; and in each of these posts he has acquitted himself with honour. With the Albany Bible Society he has been long and usefully identified. Of the Albany City Tract Society he has been a member, and I believe, a Director from its commencement; and the last notice that he heard me read from the pulpit was a notice on the last Sabbath, that he would call on the members of the congregation during the then coming week, to receive their contributions in aid of this most important domestic charity. Death has defeated his benevolent purpose; but I am sure you will take care that

your offering is not withheld, even though the hand that *would* have received it lies motionless in the grave. In later years, his benevolent spirit has found exercise chiefly in the way of counsel and activity; but in his more prosperous days his hand as well as his heart was open, and when the names of the most liberal men among us were mentioned, his name was not likely to be forgotten.

I have dwelt at some length upon his character; but really my convictions of what is due to his memory would not allow me to say less. I must still add a word in respect to his *signal departure* — having "walked with God" full forty years, "he was not,—for God took him."

The week before his death he had attended the meeting of the Presbytery, where, as he told me, he was specially pleased and edified by the exercises; but did it occur to him, think you, that that was the last occasion of the kind on which he would ever be present? The Saturday evening before, he was in his place, as usual, at the prayer meeting, but there was nothing to indicate to himself or to others that he had come for the last time. The Sunday before, he was here a devout and attentive

worshipper, and still there is no dark sign to portend his speedy departure—for aught that appears he may be with us at the appointed Communion, and you may receive the elements from his hands just as you have done in other days and years. His last morning dawned upon him, and its beams were as bright and his spirit as cheerful as ever. He read the Bible, not knowing but that he should return to it a thousand times. He committed himself and his family to God in prayer, never suspecting that he was making his last approach to the throne of mercy. He dreams not of it,—but his spirit is actually spreading its wings for the final flight,—and lo! he is not there. His family in their terror and distress fly for medical aid; but the physician comes only to find that he has no patient to administer to. Death was not permitted to reveal himself till his work was done; and his work was nothing more than a sudden opening of the gates of immortality. The tidings, as they went abroad, occasioned deep sorrow in many hearts; but the bereavement was so qualified by mercy,—I had almost said, so clothed with glory from the opening Heavens, that those hearts that bled the most

deeply could bow submissively and even gratefully before the God of all comfort.

And now I am sure I may say—"Blessed are ye that mourn;" for to have had a friend who walked with God so long, and was taken up to Heaven, as if some angel hand had in mercy suddenly parted the cord that held the spirit to its earthly tabernacle, so that Death should have no opportunity to display his terrors,—to have had a friend, I say, the subject of such a living and such a dying experience—seems to demand at least that you should mingle thanksgiving with your tears. I know that the dwelling from which he was taken must seem desolate—desolate to the bereaved children, on whose ear the voice of paternal counsel will no more fall—desolate to the stricken widow, who feels that the light of her habitation has gone out,—that the arm on which she leaned next to that of God has been withdrawn; but I would say to all the weeping inmates and visitors of that dwelling—be of good cheer, for the Lord hath dealt graciously with you. May the instructions and admonitions which have there been communicated, the prayers which have there been offered, the good example

which has there been exhibited, return upon you now in a tide not only of grateful recollection, but of hallowed heavenly influence. He whom you loved and whose memory you now reckon your choicest treasure, is not lost but has ascended. He had spoken his last words on earth the moment before you saw him turn into a corpse; but he speaks to you from yonder brighter world, and in accents which he has already caught from the angels, saying "Come up hither."

I cannot forbear to advert to the fact that there is here to day a commingling of two different scenes of mourning. At the moment when the news was spreading through this family circle that its venerable head had fallen in death, other sad tidings which had been already foreshadowed, were flying hither from a distant part of the country, to cause at least some of these mourners to feel that God had smitten them not only on the right hand but on the left.* And this last mentioned dispensation

* The person whose death is here alluded to is NATHANIEL S. PRENTICE, son of the late venerable Sartell Prentice of this city. He was born at Alstead, N. H., January 18, 1800, and removed with his father's family in 1816 to Canton, St. Lawrence County, N. Y.; where he was married in 1823, and continued to reside until the

has made other mourners in the midst of us—aye, and others still who are not here; and one especially whom I cannot forbear to mention, —a venerable mother in Israel, long a valued member of this church, who is hereby bereaved of a beloved son. May that God whom she lives only to serve, dwell in her heart now as the Comforter. May all to whom either of these dispensations is a domestic bereavement, quietly submit to God's will, diligently study the lessons

autumn of 1854, when, with his own family he removed to Green Bay, Wisconsin. In 1853, he lost a very promising son just entering, under flattering circumstances, upon the profession of Law at Green Bay—an affliction which well nigh overwhelmed him, while he received it as an admonition to set his house in order. It was not till quite lately that he determined to make Green Bay his permanent residence; but having at length formed the purpose, he came to St. Lawrence County in the autumn of the last year with a view to make an ultimate arrangement of his affairs, and extended his journey to this city and Brooklyn to pay a visit to the several members of his father's family. He left his friends here to return home on the 18th of November, and after a tedious and protracted journey, reached his family not far from the middle of December. While he had yet scarcely recovered from the effects of a cold which he took on his way home, he was attacked by what proved to be Typhoid fever, which terminated fatally on the 18th of January,—his fifty-seventh birth day. He was a man of vigorous intellect, and of great moral energy and disinterestedness of purpose united with a modest and retiring spirit. He was early the subject of deep religious impressions, and his Christian friends had great confidence that he had, in the best sense, felt the power of religion; but owing partly to his extreme diffidence and partly to peculiar circumstances, he never made a public profession of his faith His example, however, in other respects, was worthy of a Christian, and his death was what might have been expected from his life.

of his providence, and gratefully acknowledge the consolation with which their affliction comes attended.

Another member of the Eldership is gone; and it comes to me as a depressing and monitory thought that the last of those whom I found in this relation on my introduction here, has now finished his earthly course. You, my brethren, the surviving members of the Session, are ready, I know, to render a grateful testimony in regard to the manner in which our beloved and lamented associate performed every part of his official duty. You know how watchful he was for opportunities of promoting the interests of this church,—not indeed in the spirit of an unhallowed or sectarian rivalry, but from a regard to his obligations, as connected with the position in which Providence had placed him; and how promptly and cheerfully he co-operated with us in every work of faith and labour of love to which, in our associate capacity, we have been called. Let the remembrance of his good example quicken us to a higher sense of obligation. Let the remembrance of his sudden death admonish us not to put off any duty till to-morrow that should be done to-day. Let us

bear in mind that the places we now occupy, Death will soon make ready for others; and while we are permitted to hold them, let it be for the benefit of the Church and for the Master's honour. And whether Death comes upon us in disguise, or approaches us in his own dark livery, may we not fear to encounter him, having our record both on earth and in Heaven.

I am affected by the thought that the congregation that I see before me is, with few exceptions, composed of different individuals from that which I found at the commencement of my ministry here—some indeed have removed to other places, but almost all have gone to the grave. And surely you who remain, cannot dissemble to yourselves the fact that the smallness of your number has an ominous bearing upon your own individual prospects; that if every other record from which your near approach to the eternal world could be inferred, had perished, this alone might stand in the place of all other evidence. Nor can I be insensible that the fact that I have stood here while nearly an entire generation has passed away, witnesses to another fact,—that at no distant period I must join the portion of my

congregation who have gone to mingle in eternal scenes. Whatever effect my ministry may have had upon you hitherto, it is my heart's desire and prayer to God that the brief portion of it that remains may not be lost upon you. Suffer me to ask you, in all plainness and fidelity, do you feel that you have accomplished life's great end; that you have treasure laid up in Heaven; that you are ready even now to finish your course with joy? If any of you are constrained, in spite of all your better purposes, to answer in the negative, then I must tell you honestly and earnestly that you have no time to lose. And if you ask me wherefore it is that I am so importunate, I answer, it is because your soul is in jeopardy, and the world weighed against it is less than the small dust of the balance. I answer again, it is because I shall not be here long to exhort you, neither will you be here long to be exhorted; and what either you or I do in this great concern must be done quickly. And yet again I answer, your long continued and uninterrupted kindness has drawn you too near to my heart, to allow me to look with any other emotions than those of deep anxiety upon your perilous condition.

Pause, I pray you, in the whirl of business long enough to think of dying, and to dress yourself for your appearance before God. You may die, as our venerable friend died, without the warning of a moment. May you be found, like him, walking with God, so that Death,—come when and how he may,—shall perform for you only the work of a good angel, in taking your spirit out of prison, and introducing it to the liberty and purity and glory of the third Heavens.

With the event which we mourn, we can hardly fail to connect a grateful recollection of God's special goodness towards us as a church and congregation. The little company who originally came hither to worship, were men of enlarged views and active habits—some of them of cultivated minds, and some, of deep and earnest piety—as a body they were well fitted to give direction and stability to such an enterprise. And they called to be their pastor a man who partook largely of their own liberal and noble spirit; whose fine mind, and bland and genial temper, and earnest devotion to his appropriate work, could not but exert a benign influence upon those to whom he ministered. Thus it was that the character of this

congregation was originally formed. And now especially, when those who then composed it, have almost all joined the great assembly of the dead, surely it is fitting that we should render due honour to their memories, and especially that we should thankfully acknowledge what God has wrought for us through their instrumentality. I charge you who have come up and are coming up to take their places, to regard their memories as a deposite to be sacredly cherished and transmitted. I charge you moreover to see to it that the character of this Christian Society does not suffer in passing through your hands; especially that the harmony which now pervades it, and which has scarcely been interrupted from the beginning, never becomes the sport of a selfish, reckless, or unconciliatory spirit. I charge you above all that you do not substitute the mere sustaining of Christian institutions or a regular attendance upon them for a cordial and practical reception of the Gospel; that, while by one course of actions you eulogize Christianity as if it were every thing, you do not by another disparage it as if it were nothing. You will not have discharged your duty to posterity merely by

transmitting to them the institution of public worship and a preached Gospel; but along with it must be continued an active and spiritual Church,—a high standard of Christian activity and liberality,—a spirit of vigorous and hearty co-operation for the advancement of all the great interests of humanity. Aim at this, labour for this, and by God's blessing you will accomplish it. And thus will your good influence here flow on, silent but powerful, ages after you have gone to move in a higher sphere. Thus will you accumulate upon yourselves the gratitude of myriads of hearts which will not begin to beat till long after yours have beat their last pulsations. Thus too will you lay up treasure in Heaven, which will not only never corrupt but will increase in value throughout your whole eternal existence.